

# How a Bill Becomes a Law in Hawaii (No Kitten Around!)

Someone has an idea for a **state law**. They talk about their idea to a **legislator**. The legislator writes a **bill** asking for that law. Senators and representatives are our state legislators.



All the members in that legislator's **chamber** (the House of Representatives or Senate) gather together at the Capitol and vote on the bill for the first time. This first large group vote is called a "First Reading."



The bill is assigned to one or more **committees**.

If the first committee likes the idea, they have a **public hearing** to listen to what people think about the bill. People send in their thoughts electronically and some come speak to the committee in person in support of or against the bill.



If the committee still thinks the bill is a good idea, they vote to pass the bill. Sometimes the committee changes the bill first. These changes are called **amendments**.

If this next committee likes the idea, they have a public hearing and hear from people. Then, if the committee still thinks the bill is a good idea, they vote to pass the bill.



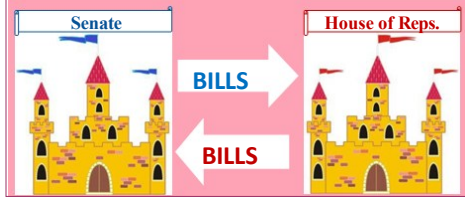
The bill goes for a second large group vote called a "Second Reading." Then, if the bill is assigned to more committees, it goes to the second committee.



After going through all the committees it was assigned, the bill goes for a third full group vote called a "Third Reading." The bill must go through three "Readings" where all the senators or representatives vote on the bill.

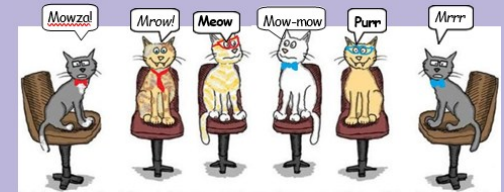


After Third Reading, the bill is sent to the other chamber. This means that if the bill started in the House, it goes to the Senate. If it started in the Senate, it goes to the House. This is called **crossover** because the bill crosses from the House to the Senate, or from the Senate to the House.



Now that the bill is in the other chamber, it has to go through the same steps it did in the first chamber. The legislators in this new chamber might change the bill even more.

If legislators in the House of Representatives liked the bill one way, but legislators in the Senate liked the bill a different way, then small groups of representatives and senators called **conference committees** meet together to try to agree on what the final bill will say.



② If the governor does not like the bill, then the governor will **veto**. If the governor vetoes the bill, the bill can still become law if 2/3 of the House of Representatives and 2/3 of the Senate vote that it should be law. This shared power between the governor and the legislature is part of what we call **checks and balances**.

① It isn't over yet. Now the bill is sent to the governor. The governor can sign the bill to make it a law. The governor can also wait until a certain date, and the bill will become a law without the governor's signature.

The final version of the bill is voted on by both the full House of Representatives and full Senate one last time. Legislators want to make sure everyone agrees this bill is a good idea for a law. If the majority votes yes, the bill has passed the legislature.



See word definitions on other side



## Definitions and space for your illustrations

**Amendments** are changes that legislators make to a bill. Bills can be passed with amendments or passed without amendments.

A **bill** is an idea for a law that has been written down and given to the chamber by a legislator. In Hawaii, only legislators can introduce bills, but people can tell legislators their idea for a new law and ask the legislator to write a bill. That bill might become a law!

A **chamber** is a lawmaking group. The Hawaii State Legislature has two chambers, and they are called the Senate and House of Representatives. There are 25 senators in the Senate, and 51 representatives in the House of Representatives.

When there are "**checks and balances**," power is shared so that one part of government does not become too powerful. In Hawaii, power is shared among three *branches* of government. These branches are the legislative branch (the legislature), the executive branch (the governor and departments such as the Department of Education), and the judicial branch (the courts). The legislative branch makes the laws, the executive branch enforces the laws, and the judicial branch interprets the laws.

A **committee** is a small group of legislators that consider bills on certain subjects, such as education, health, technology, or agriculture.

**Conference committees** are small groups of senators and representatives that meet to agree on the final version of a bill. This happens near the very end of a bill's journey to becoming a law.

A **legislator** is a person who makes laws. Legislators are elected. This means that people vote for who they want to be a legislator. The legislators elected to the Senate are called senators, and the legislators elected to the House of Representatives are called representatives.

A **public hearing** is an event where people can give their opinions to legislators on a bill.

Some laws are made by the *federal* government (the United States of America), and some laws are made by the states. **State laws** are laws made by states. Each of the fifty states have their own state laws. States follow their own laws and they follow federal laws.

To **veto** means to refuse to allow something to be done. In Hawaii, the governor has the power to veto a bill that the legislature passes so that it does not become a law.

